

How Birthday Parties Began

Showing the pagan roots of this practice.....

How Birthday Parties Started

Around the world, friends and relatives hold birthday parties, give gifts to the one being honored, and wish "Happy birthday!" to the one whose birthday is being celebrated. But why? Where did this universal custom originate?

The World Book -- Childcraft International says regarding "Holidays and Birthdays," "For thousands of years people all over the world have thought of a birthday as a very special day. Long ago, people believed that on a birthday a person could be helped by good spirits, or hurt by evil spirits. So, when a person had a birthday, friends and relatives gathered to protect him or her. And that's how birthday parties began."

"The idea of putting candles on birthday cakes goes back to ancient Greece. The Greeks worshipped many gods and goddesses. Among them was one called Artemis."

"Artemis was the goddess of the moon. The Greeks celebrated her birthday once each month by bringing special cakes to her temple. The cakes were round like a full moon. And, because the moon glows with light, the cakes were decorated with lighted candles."

The Greeks believed that everyone had a protective spirit or daemon who attended his birth and watched over him in life. This spirit had a mystic relation with the god on whose birthday the individual was born.

The Romans also subscribed to this idea. This notion was carried down in human belief and is reflected in the guardian angel, the fairy godmother and the patron saint. Birthday candles, in folk belief, are endowed with special magic for granting wishes. Lighted tapers and sacrificial fires have had a special mystic significance ever since man first set up altars to his gods. The birthday candles are thus an honor and tribute to the birthday child and bring good fortune.

This authority goes on: "More and more, though, people the world over attach a certain magic to their actual date of birth... We may wear a ring with our birthstone in it for good luck. And when we blow out the candles on our birthday cake, we are careful to keep what we wished a secret. If we tell, of course, our wish won't come true."

"In other words, many times one follows - THE OLD BIRTHDAY BELIEFS. one pays attention to the meanings of old-time birth symbols and indulges in OLD CELEBRATIONS. one does not take them seriously - mainly for fun.

Why do people say, "Happy birthday!" to each other? Says this authority, "For the good wishes of our friends and relatives are supposed to protect us from evil spirits."

Egyptians observed birthdays, but only for their rulers. They held parades, circuses, gladiatorial contests, and sumptuous feasts! The Romans staged parades and chariot races to celebrate birthdays; some of which were created for their gods. Mere mortals were not honored or even remembered on the day of their birth.

The birthday cake is only 200 years old! Cakes made from sweetened bread dough and coated with sugar, were the first birthday cakes and they originated in Germany.

It has been said that if the cake falls while baking, it is a sign of bad luck in the coming year. Coins, buttons, and rings were baked into cakes. The guest who receiving the slice with the coin was guaranteed riches in the future, the ring signified marriage.

In ancient times, people prayed over the flames of an open fire. They believed that the smoke carried their thoughts up to the gods. Today, the belief is, that if you blow out all your candles in one breath, your wish will come true.

All these customs and traditions connected with the observance of birthdays have to do with guessing the future, good wishes for the future, good luck charms against evil spirits, and the like. All the birthday rituals, games, and ceremonies are a form of well-wishing toward the birthday child, which are supposed to work their magic in the year ahead. But, as we have seen, the custom is totally PAGAN!

The tradition of birthday parties started in Europe a long time ago. It was feared that evil spirits were particularly attracted to people on their birthdays. To protect them from harm, friends and family would come to be with the birthday person and bring good thoughts and wishes. Gifts brought even more good cheer to ward off the evil spirits. This is how birthday parties began.

At first it was only kings who were recognized as important enough to have a birthday celebration (maybe this is how the tradition of birthday crowns began?). As time went by, children became included in birthday celebrations. The first children's birthday parties occurred in Germany and were called *Kinderfeste*. (Children celebrations)

Should a Muslim have anything to do with ceremonies that trace back to pagan times, and pagan rituals? Should a Muslim indulge himself or his or her children in pagan birthday parties, just because they seem so attractive, fun, and "innocent"?

These birthday celebrations, therefore originated from pagan belief. These also involve imitation of the Jews and Christians in their birthday celebrations.

Warning us against following their ways and traditions, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said : "You would follow the ways of those who came before you step by step, to such an extent that if they were to enter a lizard's hole, you would enter it too." They said, "O Messenger of Allah, (do you mean) the Jews and Christians?" He said, "Who else?" **(Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim)**

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also said: "Whoever imitates a people is one of them." **(Abu Dawood)**

Anas ibn Maalik (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came (to Madinah) and they had two days in which they would (relax and) play. He said, What are these two days? They said, We used to play (on these two days) during the Jahiliyyah. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Allah has given you something better instead of them: Yawm ul-Duha (Eid al-Adha) and Yawm ul-Fitr (Eid al-Fitr). **(Reported by Abu Dawood)**

This indicates clearly that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) definitely forbade his ummah to celebrate the festivals of the kuffaar, and he strove to wipe them out by all possible means. The fact that the religion of the People of the Book is accepted does not mean that their festivals are approved of or should be preserved by the ummah, just as the rest of their kufr and sins are not approved of.

Indeed, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went to great lengths to command his ummah to be different from them in many issues that are mubaah (permitted) and in many ways of worship. This being different was to be a barrier in all aspects, because the more different you are, the less likely you are to do the acts of those who go astray.

The hadith "Every people has its festival, and this is our festival" implies exclusivity, that every people has its own festival, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "For every nation there is a direction to which

they face (in their prayers) (al-Baqarah 2:148) and

to each among you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way" (al-Maaidah 5:48)

This implies that each nation has its own ways. The laam in li-kulli (for every, to each) implies exclusivity. So if the Jews have a festival and the Christians have a festival, it is just for them, and we should not have any part in it, just as we do not share their qiblah (direction of prayer) or their laws.